

*The
Months*

J. V. BLAKE



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The Months

A BOOK OF THOSE HANDSOME
KIN, FOR LOVE OF THEM ALL,
AND OF LIFE, AND OF THE
EARTH

BY
JAMES VILA [✓]BLAKE
" "

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JAMES VILA BLAKE



My Dear Friend,

Do you remember how often, while we were in business together, when we met at morning in the counting room, our greeting was, "Well, what verse have you written over night?" Then followed some very happy moments, a half hour perhaps, of poetical reading and conference. We were not the less shrewd and ready in business thereafter—were we? Would it not be happy for the world if all business partners began the day in like manner? During very many years of such poetic fellowship we have worked and walked and talked and wheeled and sung and broken bread and played and stood by graves together. In grateful memory of all this rich friend-life I ask leave to inscribe this little book to you.

Faithfully,

JAMES VILA BLAKE

Chicago, June 1, 1907.

FOREWORD

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Gentle reader, we must live on this earth and in time. Therefore it is very happy for us that the earth, as it goes singing in its orbit, discourseth so sweetly that it makes time a long song, divided into twelve chapters or strophes. The moment the song is completed it is begun again; but the composition is so beautiful that it never wearies us, but always is new and adorable. If it please you to begin attending with me to these strophes, you will run no risk of tedious trouble, for you can stop conveniently anywhere; but I hope that through ear and eye you will give comfortable lodgement in your heart to these twelve children of one year :

April, first mother of soft silent
showers,
May, adding many to April's sweet-
few flowers,

F O R E W O R D

- 6 June, glorying in fresh-green summer
bowers,
July, that flameth in bright ardent
hours,
August, with pouch of fruits that
promise more,
September, selling the green for golden
store,
October, that the gold doth crimson
o'er,
November, glad wi' the garnered gold
galore,
December, cloak of ermine for Christ's
birth,
January, begilt with New Year mirth,
February, becrystaling the earth,
March, soothsaying the spring mid
wintry dearth,—
These twelve be daughters of one
matron virtue,
The queenly Year! What canticles
be her due!



APRIL

A P R I L .



THE coy maid April hath very beautiful grace ; and the grace is notable because it were acceptable anywhere. For April were as welcome twixt June and July, or as delightful suspended twixt mid-winter months, as with changeable charms she ends the controversies of March. Now, March hath a lusty buxom goodness in a rough fleece cloak, and February hath notable charms of her own as I shall say and sing very soon ; but neither of them nor any other month could fit anywhere ; this is a sociability belonging to gentle April alone.

Therefore, having a mind to sing the twelve kin, I am fain to begin the cycle with April, the one of them all that could buckle the zone in any place, and assuage with her tears either heats or chills. Moreover, she is named well, being the Opener, that unlocks the earth for first flowers and

12 promise of others ; whence as on the earth, so in a cycle of song, she the first may claim to trip her airy and showery way.

See now how beautiful is this maid, the leader-in of the various year ; how lustrous with heavenly showers, how fresh with green, how blossoming, liberal to brooks, verduring the trees, and always as ready with smiles and tears as our joys and griefs tumble over one another. How fair the rainy lights, and how fair the lightsome rains, their intervals, their successions; and with what lovely blossoms, delicate little wells, are drunk up the superfluties of the waters. All which I have humbly prayed the kind Spirit of Song to set to music for me — with answer thus :

April, floral channel o' streamy skies,
Roral domain, wet lustres, dript diamonds !

Or shall we say, Sweet maid, whose
weepy ponds

Loose their slow freshets from her
tender eyes

Laving with heavenly-fiery drops her
face?

Ay, so ; and she in every new green
place

That under trees or in a meadow lies,
Poureth her innocent coquetries of
showers

Besprinkling the coy plenties of her
flowers,

Whose many a one into her bosom
spies :

She binds them in her breast or at her
zone, —

Most willing they, and fondly all her
own,

And each in that dear warmth its
lashes dries :

There while on beaded green grass
she hath stayed —

Five beads o' rain that day to every
blade —

And nooks are lush, and runnels slip
along,

Now have I mind to sing her a sweet
song,

Which thus from all my heart to her
doth rise :

S O N G .



MAID April, wherefore weepest
thou

In sweet inconstant days,
Making a motley of smiles and tears
Along thy pearly ways ?

Dost mourn for rough and ready
March,

Whose snows (Ah, burly lover !)
Thy saxifrage, hepatica
And sweet arbutus cover ?

Or dost thou weep that gladsome May
And eke the sunny June
So long delay vexatiously,
Although a-coming soon ?

So then thou spend'st thy time in
smiley

Tears for kindred other,
And teary smiles for dear sweet things
To which thou 'rt virgin mother.

A P R I L

Nay, nay, sweet April, of thyself,
We pray, more fondly think,
Of all the sweetness, fairness, dearness,
That throng in thee a-brink.

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For this we say, and always will,
Whether we walk, play, delve,
That thou, sweet maid, art e'er among
The loveliest of the twelve.

E A S T E R S O N G S .

I.

Every year the Spring,
Every year the Fall :
First the Spring when earth doth sing,
Then the Fall when passeth all —
Every, every year.

Every day the morn,
Every day the night :
First the morn when light is born,
Then the night when fadeth sight —
Every, every day.

Every soul hath breath,
Every soul hath death :
First the breath that pleasureth,
Then the death that gathereth —
Every, every soul.

Every life hath love,
Every life hath loss :
First the love that looks above,
Then the loss that sweeps across
Every, every life.

God's in Spring and Fall,
God's in morn and night —
Spring and Fall that come to all,
Morn and night the double-bright, —
Always, always God.

God's in death and breath,
God's in loss and love :
Death or breath him witnesseth,
Loss and love both point above —
Always, always God.

God's the all of all,
I'm his and he's mine :
If all, what reck's what may befall?
If mine, all's love and light divine : —
Always, always God.

Every love he loves,
And he makes it life —
Life with never end nor stint,
Life that hath th' immortal in't, —
Every, every love.

Every year the Spring !
Every day the light !
Comes the Spring new life to bring,
Comes the light of Easter-sight, —
Every, every year !
Every, every day !

II.

How simple on its stem a flower
Doth bloom above the dew,
Looking to heaven every hour
With native eyes of blue,
Native unto the skies' own hue!

How simply do the creatures plan
Who spin themselves a grave,
And hide therein a little span,
Then flutter forth full brave, —
Flutter, and gilded pinions wave.

How simple 'tis a man to be,
To live, to love, to think,
Who looks forth from his eyes to see,
And standeth on the brink,
Standeth whence soul soars, ne'er to
sink!

O, life is thrice simplicity,
Plain as the blooming things,
As spinning cocoon-creatures be,
And simple as new wings,
Simple as soul that prays and sings:

O, life is simple fellowship
With thing, and man, and beast,
And death is naught, that cannot nip
What shineth, large or least—
Shineth with one light, west or east :

O, life is earth-wide fellowship,
And death has naught to say ;
Saith naught but it to life doth slip
As roundeth night to day
Around the rounded world alway.

Wherefore, awake me, orient life,
Or lull me, occident ;
With east or west I have no strife,
But follow with one bent,
Follow with Easter merriment.

III.

The bright new Spring
Maketh the season glad :
The year doth bring
"The grand recoil
Of life resurgent from the soil,"
When all bright things return, and
flee the sad.

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This Easter Day
Is the new season's season :
Its upward ray
Is to the heart
What to the earth is sun's warm part,
Enforcing it to joy with precious
reason.

'Tis sure the sun
Will rouse the flowery earth :
The brooks will run,
The blossoms lift
Sweet eyes to see bright vapors drift,
And creature voices praise th' ec-
static birth.

O heavenly blaze
That doth involve my soul,
In these new days
Be my heart dight
Not less than earth with loving light,
And thorough me immortal knowl-
edge roll!

IV.

I heard a bird sing in a tree,
He singeth up right lustily,

He singeth long, he singeth well,
Naught is nor can be fairer-fair :
Yet saith my heart, 'Tis sooth to tell,
There must be songs elsewhere.

Then went I to a prattling brook ;
Its music all my senses took,
The song is glad, the song is bright,
And softly shrill as eddied air :
Yet saith my heart, This sense is right,
There must be songs elsewhere.

Then went I to woods-aisles and
nooks,
That sing more than a thousand
brooks ;
Sweet chorus 'tis, the winds and trees
Concerting voices rich and rare :
Yet saith my heart, This is heart 's-
ease,
There must be songs elsewhere.

Then went I to the shore o' seas,
That sing more than ten thousand
trees ;
The song is loud, the tone more grand
Than ever angels' trumpets bare :

22

Yet saith my heart, This still doth stand,

There must be songs elsewhere.

Then went I far from fog or fen,
To homes where women sing with men,

And baby-pipes that bird-wise float
Make trios where was erst a pair :
Yet saith my heart, This doth denote
There must be songs elsewhere.

That elsewhere, dear elsewhere,
It rustleth in my soul like air,
Like billows, brooks, winds, birds
and trees,

Men, women, and what women bear :
And cries my heart, 'Tis more than
these,

That glorious song elsewhere.

V.

"Where are they?"

Why, here :

Where should they be, I pray,

My own beloved? Away?

Forever and a day

Heart-near

They walk with me and stay.

“Where are they”, indeed!

23

“But vanished?”

O, yea,

Just from the sight of eyes.

“Tear-blinded?” Well, surprise

Caught me sorrow-wise:

But nay,

Opake are not the skies.

“But vanished”, indeed!

“But silent?”

Why, yes,

Just to the sense of ears,

Or when belogged with fears

I have no soul that hears

Express:

Heaven to their voices clears.

“But silent”, indeed!

“Where are they? But vanished?

But silent?” What queries!

Well, well—

Hast thou naught better to do,

Or hast thou nothing in view,

Or is naught given to you

To tell?

Or hath love nothing new?

What queries indeed!

Up from earth leaps the seed
Into heavens boundless, glorious,
golden ;

Germ within must be freed
From its little coffer, broken, olden.

Riseth life transcendent !

Now the lordly tree

Verdure-bright will be ;

Lissom branches pendent

Cluster flowers ;

Sunny hours

Warm the fruit resplendent.

This the glory of the Spring,

This the life that birds do sing,

This the promise that doth bring

Springtide joy and caroling !

Up from earth leaps the heart
Into heavens boundless, glorious,
golden ;

Dreams within upward start
From their mortal temple, broken,
olden.

Heaven forever shineth,

And the spirit free

Lights of joy doth see, —

Evermore divineth
Through the portal
That immortal
Life with love entwined.
This the glory that doth spring
In the soul, and rise and sing,
This the promise that doth bring
Easter joy and caroling !

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VII.

Spring, sing to my heart !
Sing to me, bring to me
All thy bountiful beams !
Come with thy showers, come with
thine hours
Of breeze, of trees, of flowers, of
bowers,
Of Paradise, carolings, dreams !
With voice of bird in the new green
heard,
Spring, sing to my heart !

Life, sing to my heart !
Sing to me, bring to me
All thine infinite light !
Come with thy beauty, come with
thy duty

A P R I L

26

To bear, to dare, to earn, to learn
The wond'rous, the awful, the
right!

Song of my soul, within me roll!
Life, sing to my heart!

Love, sing to my heart!
Sing to me, bring to me
All thy peace in my strife!
By thy fast cleaving, ne'er losing,
ne'er leaving,
Enfolding, upholding, believing, re-
trieving,
Thou showest the deathless in life!
Love that breaks never is life that
lives ever!
Love, sing to my heart!

Faith, sing to my heart!
Sing to me, bring to me
All thy might and thy rest!
With thine adoring, with thine out-
pouring
Of light, of sight, of power, of dower
Of love unending and blest,
Opens the portal of life immortal!
Faith, sing to my heart!

VIII.

'Tis a sweet story old
How our first parents waked in Eden,
And unto them unrolled
The lovely beaming, blooming land-
scape,
The velvet green, the fruits of ruby
and gold.

Right surely then they smiled
To see so beauteous a region,
Rife, in the shady-aisled
High arches of the leafy temple,
With things at once imparadised and
wild.

They had all gracious flowers
Aroma-spilling on soft zephyrs,
New birds sang sunny hours,
New running creatures gamboled
harmless,
Nature profuse enriched her horn of
powers.

A P R I L

28

O, it was beautiful !
How more could benefits almighty
Be fair and plentiful ?
How more could Mercy infinitely
Provide abodes for pleasures glory-
full ?

But O, there was much more—
A mighty kingdom was awaiting !
The hearts of them were sore
With “sadness of the whole of
pleasure;”
Divine inquietude upon them bore.

'Twas not that in the store
Of all the bounteous, beauteous glory
Appeared aught to deplore,—
It seemed one lovely perfect splendor:
Yet still they said, There must be
something more !

They prophesied, Can soul
Expect too greatly of the Father ?
This must be but a shoal
Of his one tide of love supernal ;
And we who have that thought, must
share the whole.

A P R I L

Not that we love the less
This region dear of faithful beauty ;
But soul hath the impress
Of an "eternal weight of glory"
And to be dream-full so is blessedness!

29

This very glory here
Proveth 'tis not the all of glory ;
Nay, though so bright and dear,
'Tis but a carol in the passing,
Which we who sing, sing but to
persevere.

And so it hath been aye,
Unto this time from that beginning—
So hath been every day!
As blest in all times as in any,
We hold perforce and more that
glory-way.

So must it be love-long,
So meaneth this beloved season!
To toil love-full, love-strong,
This is to know the life immortal,
And bend o'er all the year the
Easter Song!

IX.

O blessed Voice of Love and Faith,
That life immortal witnesseth,
And to the waiting spirit saith,
“In my Father’s house are many
mansions!”

Now Spring doth sing and waters
leap ;
Earth’s times a deathless vigil keep,
And life returns from hidings deep:
“In the Father’s house are many
mansions!”

My soul, let earth one mansion be;
The heavens then hear that call to
thee,
With all the stars in company,
“In the Father’s house are many
mansions!”

And mansions more for aye have
been

Beyond this round of stars serene,
Eternal built in heavens unseen :

“In the Father’s house are many
mansions !”

Dear Master, Voice of Love and
Faith,

Thy word doth live, and in me
saith—

And all my spirit answereth—

“In my Father’s house are many
mansions !”

O blest and dear is mortal breath,
And blest is life and love,—and
death,

Because the soul within me saith,

“In my Father’s house are many
mansions !”

MAY

MAY.



IF any man think he hath outgrown going a-Maying, 'twere well to ask himself seriously whether ever he hath grown up to it. I have heard of, nay, unhappily seen, poor people hoveled or herded in bad, uncleanly, ill-drained, unsightly, unwholesome collision in cities, who, styed thus a few rods from a great lake, never have seen waters glisten, nor heard them wash forth music, nor in any manner nor in any weather come near them. Or packed straightly and crowded a short wagon-ride from the country, they never have beheld green trees or growing flowers, or a brook, or a cow, nor known what milk is, believing it a kind of manufacture. This is a pit-eous misery ; and some persons, or all together, are to blame for it ; and if all together, then they most who are most powerful and rich. The denunciation of Amos will come upon

them, — “ Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes. * * * * Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself” (Amos, II). And one manner of this punishment on them who scrape together too much while many get too little, is that they are as they are; for no penalty is so pitiless as just this, to be pitiless, and toss about their kickshaws in the face of them who want bread. More wretched, I mean in a worse way wretched, than they who herd where plashing waves almost wash their ears, yet they can hear them not and their backs are bent from them to toils — more wretched are they who have leisure and wide houses and wagons, yet never get them forth a-Maying, and know not how the May-Apple looks when it pushes its parachute of foliage through the soft soil, nor ever tenderly brush

*M**A**Y*

away brown leaves to inhale, from
under them, the compounded flavor
of the pink *Arbutus* and the wet
delicious mould.

37

But what has become of his love-life
who takes not to fields and woods in
May-days? I warrant me there was
a time when he was every whit as
lusty for a-Maying as young *Arcite*
for *Emily*, when to get greenery for
her, and to observe ceremony to
May, he

“Is ridden to the felde him to pley,
Out of the court were it a mile or
twey,
And to the grove of which that I
you told
By adventure his way he gan to
hold,
To maken him a gerlond of the
greves,
Were it of woodbine or of hauthorn
leves,
And loud he song again the sonne
shene :
O *Maye*, with all thy floures and
thy grene,

Right welcome be thou, faire freshe
May ;
I hope that I some grene here getten
may. ”

But this old dreary fellow, who will not go a-Maying now, was he alert for the maid, and is he now dull for the matron ? But when by him she is no longer a maid, then forever should he be “by twenty thousand fold liefer to be in forest wild” at this season, and pledge her with every bowery romance. Or mayhap is it she who hath grown dull ? Or hath each ground the other to a worldly dullness, a partnership whose account of profit and loss falls the wrong way ?

But how bright the sight when old lovers go a-Maying together as romantically as ever, with the young ones hard by whose hearts and feet dance together along the same old ways.

Having these thoughts, I made known to the kind Spirit of Song that it were great boon to me if the Spirit would tune the thoughts, or some of

them, with verse. Then after waiting some time (for the Spirit often demandeth much piety of waiting), I received what follows; and I humbly would it might be so worthy and fortunate, or become so by time, as to draw some sweet music to it, and every year be among the carols sung on May Day by the choir of Magdalen College atop of the beautiful tower thereof:

S O N G .

I KNOW a merry month whose all
out-doors
Is filled with rippling frolics of the play
Of children ;
The woods are aisles, and all the fields
are floors
For flowery hunt and flowery dances
gay
Of children :
The month is May.

That same bright double-fortnight
hath a boon
For the bright youth who seek a
wilding way
For lovers ;
Who loves his love approves the soft-
ened rune
Of winds in woods 'neath twilight's
fondling ray
For lovers :
The month is May .

M

A

Y

And aged and mid-aged lovers true —
Most true, more blest than youth
dreams night or day,

41

Old lovers,

Because enriched with life — roman-
cing too

They pair a-wilding in the sweet
old way,

Old lovers :

The month is May.

For children and young lovers and
old pairs

There's rue and columbine and bar-
berry spray,

With violets,

Wild strawberries that sweeten south
slope airs,

And laurels that o'erhang and hide
away

The violets :

The month is May.

Marsh marigold and mandrake and
bright thorn,

And potentilla 'mid its grassy way,

And early rose,

M

A

Y

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Iris, the cornel, the rhodora lorn,
Pyrus ; and vies the arethusa gay
With early rose :
The month is May !

JUNE

JUNE.



IN this happy climate (for truly I would call its rigors no little of its happiness) June hath been long the battle field of perfections, or the jousting lists of them, wherein they contend which shall be accounted the most eminent, whether the balm of the air, or the greenery of the trees, or the parliament of the flowers, or the colloquies of the birds, or “the sun by day and the moon and stars by night.”

“Th’ enameled knacks o’ the mead or garden”, is what a poet (“The Two Noble Kinsmen”, Act 3, Sc. 1) calls the flowers. Which is to say, the earth hath a knack of blossoming, a facility and nature — let it alone, and it will blossom; like the untoilsome craft of those gentle sincere persons who can not come near you without dressing you in their good spirits. And surely in June the earth hath

arrived at its full rondure of advent. 'Tis like a sun, yet never overscorching, rather like a fair flush of warm morning; or like a moon, yet not at bold fulness, but crescently foreshowing the orb to follow; or like a star, but not fixed and cold, rather like Hesper attending lovers; or like music, but not loud and martial, rather as a soft voice nearing silence.

Being able to think of nothing exceeding the perfectness of many a chamber of time in the house of June, I besought the kind Spirit of Song to bring me to some versing of these images, and my entreaty was answered thus:

I D Y L .



JUNE is the sun of months; not as
he burns
In tawny Arabian deserts, but as he
glows
Like blithe young hunter, who, hab-
ited in green,
Follows dark game, drives flying
Erebus.
Or June 's the moon of months; a
delicate orb, —
Not like th' emboldened round, — bar-
baric gold
Swung on swart Night, but like the
tender crescent,
Gilt on gold sky, i' the twilight o'
night and day.
Or June's the star of months; not like
the glitter
Of steely inclement points, but like
warm Hesper's
Sweet invitation, who lights the shad-
owing sky

J *U* *N* *E*

50

With lovers' lamp, beauteous for
seemly tryst.

Or June's the music of months; not
like the trumpets

Of rocky-mouthed torrents, nor like
stretched billows

Fingered by tempests, but like soft
repetitions

Of panting love, whose breathings
hesitate.

What's lovely, dulcet, lustrous, prod-
igal, light,

What's most remembered, marveled
musical, merry,

All colors—green, carnation, lilac
gold,

All newness, softness, sweetness,—
that is June.

JULY

JULY.



Standing one morning at my matin exercises, facing a wall against which I was throwing my weight on arms and shoulders and back, I observed some wavering shadows on the wall, and looked around at the sunny window surprised, for there was nothing moving between the light and the vertical surface. All was still, yet there plainly were the flickering shadows. Soon I saw the cause, namely, a lamp burning with a very small flame. The air above it was quivering across the sunbeams, and the quivers were cast, like ascending clouds, on the wall. I found this charming. For I could see no motion in the air directly, yet the soft waves came to shore on the wall in the shadows. Being a great lover of heat—which now I speak of touching the month of July—no temperature ever being too high for me, willing, as I were, to rejoice in eighty degrees in

the shade all summer long, I was delighted with the ripples of it on the wall. I was willing to call it delicate heat advanced to visibility; and my thoughts truly reveled in that fancy, as my body revels in fine heat-fervors.

But yet, let me say, the shadowy presence were far from sufficing me. I must have a real fire-sea, like Yima, and I think I come out of it full of inclination and strength to stretch the earth, as Yima did. How glorious is the pulsing billowy heat of a July noon at its best quality or high tide! I will accept no covering less royal than a tree. Under a tree, lying on my back, with "my fine features turned up to the sky" like Christopher North, I give me up to melting fervorously into the air, which is a sun-sea agitated with a splendid hot trembling throughout.

Belike few are the lovers of great heat. The more pity for them. Heat is life, from the tremendous fire-mist to this present lovely urbanity of the earth. By "the refiner's fire" of the sun the air gains an elemental sweet-

ness, full-laden with fragrances of wood and field, the tree under which I lie bathes me in its distilling essence, and the very soil breathes forth easy health after the cautery and probings of the sun ; while in the noon fire of a July day the rank vapors, infestings, decays, the out-going dumpings of Nature, if so I may say, find their vast crematory.

Thus tree-cabined, I ardently, albeit with a cool domestic content of waiting, besought the dear Spirit of Song to grant me some versing of this fervorous month ; whereto, after a good heat-ministered time, this little pastoral was vouchsafed :

S O N G .



O, the fervorous heat, the arduous
heat,
The opulent, tremulant, pulsing heat,
The shiver and shimmer,
The flicker and glimmer
O' the undulant wagging of heat i'
the air,
Of heat i' the hyaline air!

The little birds sing in the fiery dawn,
The wonderful, fiery, glorying dawn,
With crooning and tuning ;
But soon they are nooning,
And silent as sun i' the heat-laden air,
As dawn i' the gold-bearing air.

The little rills start from the hills for
the ocean,
The mother of rain and of music, the
ocean ;
But the gushing, the flushing,
The rushing, are hushing

When water itself is athirst i' the air,
I' the ocean of fire i' the air.

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Balsams of pinery, fernery, hay,
Attars of soil and the sun-mellowed
hay,

 Are rimming and skimming,

 Are brimming and swimming

The woods-sweetened, meadowed
and muscadine air,

The hay-balmy balsamined air.

Flaming July! calescent to argent,
O'er-blazing the red and the golden to
argent!

 Sun-hours replete

 With showery heat,

Burning to white-hot the azure of air,
To argent the opaline air!

AUGUST





AS April blithely foretells summer, so August sturdily hints of winter. The mornings and evenings grow cold, while yet the summer triumphs at noon. I assure you, friendly reader, I have shivered well, with no little discomfort and no trifling danger, during a long ride over a bleak country at very early dawn of a fine August day. One such ride I recall specially, and cold indeed it was. My journey-friend was discoursing volubly to my blue ears, when we passed by a lonely field, spangled and glittering with the sharp jewels that hung *italics* on the cold everywhere. In the pasture was a solitary bossy, who had passed the chill night there. "Moo-oo-oo," said the calf. "Good morning", cried my friend, incidentally but heartily, continuing his discourse to me with no breath of interruption. 'Twas a fine bit of current courtesy on both sides.

A U G U S T

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Yes, truly, if April be a coy maid,
rich enough to fling diamond showers
from one rosy hand while with the
other she scoops light from the heart
of the sun to make her rainbow bril-
liants, matronly-rich August dips her
warm finger-tips into bowls of frost
to comfort the brow of the sun-king.

This month hath virtue to bring
to pass things of her own, and yet
keeps hosts of others. In large and
generous folds, and sweeping the car-
petry of the green, trails August's
royal mantle splendidly embroidered
with blossoms, whereof the earlier
sisters have wrought many, but some
are her own creations. Looking at
this plentiful beauty, I wooed the
kind Spirit of Song in the name of
the beauty, and the Spirit sang August
to me thus :

O D E .



RICH AUGUST hath a forelook in
his eyes,
Winter's first hint, Sibylline leaves of
frost,
The sun's love o' the snow, the
snow's requital—
Foregleams like land-birds to the
distant ships.
For now the morning breathes pro-
phetic rigor,
And though high noon, where its
hot chariot carries
King Sun with blazing axle, melts the
sky,
The baby cold coos from sweet eve-
ning's arms.

Mayhap the whole day makes the
flower,
That something gains from every
hour,
And not alone the noontide fire

A U G U S T

66

Doth bid them open to desire,
And not alone cold morning dews
Have sparkles all the blossoms use,
And not alone the evening chill
Doth energize their blooming will,
But every sixty minutes o'er
They something pick from th'
twenty-four.
Hence now the Wolfsbane brave
appears,
Desmodium slender waves his ears,
Breaks forth the gold Leontodon,
And Starworts put their fringes on.
Nor these alone, bright August
flowers,
Are cooled and warmed into their
powers,
But many a lovely blossom lingers,
E'en some that April's showery
fingers
Shook out into their vanward bloom,
That muster now in August's room.
July's gold Foxglove hath for fellow
The still-seen Potentilla's yellow,
And here delayeth stoutly yet
The royal Yellow Violet.
Still winks the mead with Blue-eyed
grass,

Nymphæa floats on watery glass,
And to the same sun-sprinkled pond
Are yellow lilies no less fond.
The Jewel-weed its spotted horn
Droops o'er the marsh where th'
Cress is born,
Low blushes soft Polygala,
Gay glows the gold Baptisia,
And wayside gleams Linaria.
Looks up the woodsy Pyrola,
The splendid Cardinal is seen,
Church-crimsoned more than king or
queen ;
The Honeysuckle, Clematis,
The Centaury and Lathyrus,
The alabaster Indian Pipe, —
For these, and hosts, the month is
ripe.

So flowery is August's golden noon,
So flowery the morning of her cool-
ness,
So flowery her winter-hint o' nights,
And field and vineyard burn with gold
and purple.
These days are royal like a king's
retinue :

A U G U S T

68

First come the fore-guards, plain, the
cold mornings ;
Last ride the rear-ranks, plain, the
cold nights ;
Between them mounts the King, the
golden noon.

SEPTEMBER



THE last month of summer in this climate. And a good orator for valedictory, — her mid-day fires are fervent, and the mornings a glow. But also this is an equinoctial month. “The great September gales” are as famous as the blusterings of Brother March, the fellow in equal nights. I have seen a September gale enter a sea-board town and set the house-leaves, I mean shingles, a-flying with the tree-leaves. But if like March in adventurous winds, with what a difference! No snow nor ice nor cold, but splendid warmth, and greens shading toward purples, reds and browns, with be vies of flowers still trooping. If we call March a burly honest lad, with veins full of his winter ancestry, to what may we liken the fulfilled ripeness of September, triumphing equally in powers of marine gales and of sun-mellowed land-acres? Whether a lion’s gentleness,

S E P T E M B E R

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or a good man's ire, or battle-fields among roses, fit to our fancy, we know here a mighty heart-beat with a saving tenderness.

The names of the months are all agreeable words, though some have more euphony than others, and among these are April and the two sets of rhymers ending in *ARY* and *EMBER*. September is a gliding name, that trips from tongue by letters well affiliated, yet stronger by consonants than the other *EMBER* names, and, if I mistake not, hath a hint of both the ease and the sound of the winds. It is curious perhaps that, despite the softness and pleasantness of the sound, there are but four words in our language (if we count *MEMBER* and its compounds as one) that rhyme with *EMBER*, and three of these are month-names. April is a fine word; so is October; February little or not at all behind, and September worthy of the company.

I know not whether more than some of her warm sisters September array herself in "the gray domino of the fog", but certainly lovely gray

days and misty alliances of soft vistas belong to her. Well I remember one setting forth of me on such a gray day, in the morning. The sky was not cloudy in masses, but evenly ocean-deep everywhere with impenetrable vapor. The lacey light had no one spot on earth or in the sky which was brighter than any other place, but there was a suffusion of impartial veiled luminosity as soft as dove's down. "My heart leaped up when I beheld" the beauty of air and of gray heavens stooping close, like a Sister Evangeline bending over me. Then came a dear thought of her who once had welcomed with tears some verse of mine just because it was not addressed to her, but forsook her, she said, for a higher flight of thought. If poesy of mine were conceived worth those tears, I wished for more, and cried, Come, lovely gray day, I pray thee speak music through me wherewith her heart may dissolve again. Then the tender pearl-light of time and place became this sonnet in me:

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How beautiful this day, to eye-
sight, mind-sight,
And histories of God how beautiful
With all their wonderments by fore-
sight, hind-sight,
And all their glow that 's deep a
heaven-full !
Behold a day all gray, the very air
Is gauzy-gray — this misty brushes do ;
Mine eye doth revel in the soft pearl-
fair,
But with the mind 's eye I see through
to blue.
And here 's a gray that 's a gray
sweep of time ;
Sight likes it not — it sends a chill
abroad ;
But I 've an eye that looks through
gray or grime
To see that 'fore and after there is
God.
This gray spread on the blue I
love right well !
What story of man that not of God
doth tell !

S E P T E M B E R

But long before this gray-day jubilation I had besought the dear Spirit of Song to grant me a lay of September. "'Tis a warm rich month," said I. "A song of her is worthy of a thought-theme," answered the Spirit. "Wilt, then," said I, "put into the song a thought drawn from storm and wreck and loss?" "Ay," said the Spirit, and did so, thus :

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O D E .



SEPTEMBER, warm memory of
March,
When, as in that month of winter's
gruff or gusty cheer
In its last lustiness, and for the sec-
ond time i' the year,
The day and night are equal round
the sphere,
And from the same, then chill, now
fiery arch,
The rondure of th' all-heavenly arch,
Blew th' early blasts icy and bluff,
Hearty, athletic, rampant, rough,
And now the cloudy famous gales
That toss the hull and tear the sails
Of hapless ship again that rocks
I' the arms of mighty Equinox,
And yet in mists like wool
The sun becalmed burns full.
And when th' mists rise
Into the skies,

S E P T E M B E R

Then doth the gray-green verdure
parch —

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September, I love thee well !
Thy double majesty to tell
The sun descendeth golden hot
On flowery mead or garden spot,
And thy great tempests, furious,
Blazing, glorious, perilous,
Fall on the billowy main
Where rolling vessels strain.
Seas go up and seas go down,
And wild September gales,
That thresh the ships like flails,
Take no thought o' men that
drown ;

Yet ho ! for the winds o' the roar-
ing sea,

That shake the air to purity
From one to other pole,
The while beneath them roll
The billows that be shaken too
To keep all clean creation's brew !
And though the mighty features
Of tempests mind not creatures,
'Tis man's great part — no greater
other —
To Providence his coming brother,

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And learn to weather the fierce
storms,
Building ships in sturdier forms :
By every man that lieth drowned
below,

Another on the waves shall safely go.
Meanwhile, like ripples skimmed
from a Summer sea

And painted into flowers,
September on the land
Flingeth her sunny hours
With warm, prodigal hand,
Transmuting windy scud to bloom
o' the lea.

Many a mead shines mellow
With harvest-ready yellow,
And by a brook or nook yet stay
Blossoms lasting e'en from May.
Here is still the Pickerel Weed,
That two months gone began its
seed ;

The woods are flecked with Yellow
Sorrel,

Sabbatia, Cress, Herb Robert, Laurel ;
The Spurry Sandwort by the way
Rose-purple at our feet doth lay
In little stars ; Impatiens yet
O'erhangs a stream or places wet ;

S E P T E M B E R

Vervain, Swamp Mallow, Pale
Violet, 81
The Water-Lily, Honeysuckle,
Starwort, Lobelia Cardinal,
The Potentilla's golden eye,
Polygala's purple nestling by,
The Raspberry bush, the Black-
berry vine,
And Phytolacca's crimson shine—
These fill the mead, these light
the wood
Where eye hath looked or feet
have stood
With love, with love, with love,
with love,
Knowing that from above
For dear creation's gain
Descend the flower and hurricane !
September, September, September, ho !
Come with thy flowers,
And battling powers—
Thy merry hours
Emblossomed, and furious gales that
blow !

OCTOBER



HERE is the Fringed Gentian, marvelous beauty, in full glory, like blue buckles on golden belts arraying alike September and October. Some other flowers, too, linger from earlier season; but look they not drowsy? Like children dismissed at late twilight feast-time, Earth's precious stragglers of bloom kiss her detaining hand ere Nurse's voice calls them away and they tumble sleepily into bed.

Here are many meadows all run together, as it were, and their thus crowded versicolored flowers lifted in a tapestry and spread over the tops of the forest. Or if that fancy please not, take this one, whether bolder or less bold I know not, namely, that a thousand meadows have condensed their blossoms into thick, colored essences, wherewith Nature paints lavishly and with broad strokes whole woodlands. And if we journey

at this time through a hilly country, like our New England Berkshire, not only the front rank of trees, as in a wooded level, are visibly glowing, but vast slopes of tree-crowns, blazing and glorious with buffs and golds and crimsons and scarlets. To this add the royal dominion of the fruits, under the still flourishing but milder reign of the sun. All Nature is a "Field of the Cloth of Gold," where mellowed lights engild the gold of royal banners, hangings, vestures, trappings and liveries, and great shafts of golden flame light with glowing cheer the vast feast of yellow fruits and grains.

Here, methinks, in this rich, glorious, summer-finishing, heaven-spilling month, I may record best my extreme separation from a memorable and continually quoted line of Wordsworth, namely,

"The light that never was on sea
or land."

For many years vaguely I recited this line, as others of the many reciters have done belike, by reason

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of its curious spell-like charm. I have yielded me to its leading and misleading like as to a soft lambent marsh-light, called "Will-wi'-a-wisp;" but always with a dim uneasiness or foggy protest, which at last cleared to a denial. The line occurs in the poem called "Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont." The poet says he had seen and intimately observed the Castle during many lovely summer days, and adds,

"Ah, then if mine had been the
painter's hand,
To express what then I saw, and
add the gleam,
The light that never was on sea or
land,
The consecration and the poet's
dream,

"I would have planted thee, thou
hoary pile,
Amid a world how different from
this !

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Beside a sea that could not cease
to smile,
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of
bliss."

Here plainly the bard's emotion, "the consecration and the poet's dream," might add a manner of glory to the scene not there before, "the gleam, the light that never was on sea or land." 'Tis this which I have grown to dispute heartily, and even passionately, as being not true, and even hurtful. The glory of any splendid scenery throbs with all of me, and more! And though I add me to it, 'tis only a plunging into it, and it flows over my head! Better than Wordsworth's line is Richard Jefferies' saying, "The sunlight that falls on the heart like a song;" and better still if he had said, It is a song. And he has said so in effect, as in this paragraph: "Alone in the green-roofed cave, alone with the sunlight and the pure water, there was a sense of something more than these. The water was more to me than

water, and the sun than sun. The gleaming rays on the water in my palm held me for a moment, the touch of the water gave me something from itself. A moment and the gleam was gone, the water flowing away, but I had had them. Beside the physical water and physical light I had received from them their beauty; they had communicated to me this silent mystery." And in these lines: "Steeped in flower and pollen to the music of bees and birds, the stream of the atmosphere became a living thing. It was life to breathe it, for the air itself was life." And in the following paragraph from this passionate lover of Nature, in his "The Pageant of Summer:" "A sweet breath on the air, a soft warm hand in the touch of the sunshine, a glance in the gleam of the rippled waters, a whisper in the dance of the shadows! * * * * * There was a presence everywhere with us, though unseen,— with us on the open hill, and not shut out under the dark pines. * * * * * That we could but

take to the soul some of the greatness and beauty of the summer!"

The like is said, that is, the identity of Nature's life and meaning with our own being, in the following splendid outburst beginning Nietzsche's "So Spake Zarathustra:"

"Having attained the age of thirty, Zarathustra left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. There he rejoiced in his spirit and his loneliness, and for ten years did not grow weary of it. But at last his heart turned, — and one morning he got up with the dawn, stepped into the presence of the Sun and thus spake to him: 'Thou great star! Where would be thy happiness if thou hadst not those for whom thou shinest? For ten years thou hast come up here to my cave. Thou wouldst have gotten sick of thy light and thy journey but for me, mine eagle and my serpent. But we waited for thee every morning, received from thee thine abundance, and blessed thee for it. Lo! I am weary of my wisdom, like the bee that hath

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collected too much honey ; I need hands reaching out for it. I would fain impart and distribute until the wise among men could once more enjoy their folly, and the poor once more their riches. For that end I must descend to the depth, as thou dost at evening, when thou sinkest behind the sea and givest light to the lower regions, thou resplendent star ! I must, like thee, go down, as men call it, to whom I will descend. So bless thou me, thou peaceful eye, that canst look without envy even upon over-much happiness. Bless the cup which is about to overflow, so that the water may flow golden out of it and carry everywhere the reflection of thy rapture. Lo ! this cup is about to empty itself again, and Zarathustra once more will become a man.' Thus Zarathustra's going down began."

Now thinking thus of Wordsworth's line, and even more feeling thus, as I have said, I spoke my separation nine times from day to day, thus :

“The light that never was on sea
or land” —

Nay, nay, dear poet, 'twere better
said for me,

The light that always was on land
or sea,

And always hath the lustrous heavens
spanned.

For look we where we will, on
either hand,

Or up or down, o'er plains, where
mountains be,

In sheltered vales, or where wild
winds are free,

Where diamonds gleam, or on the
common sand, —

All light is one, and is the very
light

Beams in an eye or singeth in a
voice

When voice and eye are kindled
with the heart ;

Yea, and what light both shone and
rang so bright

When th' morning stars sang out,
and did rejoice

Creation's sons, — which light, O
God, thou art !

II.

93

“The light that never was on sea
or land!”

Thought the most gentle bard there
be two lights,

Or many, — one of earth, that flatters
the heights

And valleys, and twinkles from Arc-
turus’ band?

And other one where thoughts or
loves have fanned

The soul to flame that maketh dark-
est nights

Relucent, giveth th’ inward spirit
sights

Of Eden, and showeth where angel
armies stand?

O, no! All light’s the same and
all lights one!

In man’s, sweet woman’s, child’s,
sweet infant’s eye,

In heavenly vault of stars or moon
or sun,

In plains, great mountains, calms,
great tempests high,

Where rivers deep to seas un-
fathomed run,

Light is all one — ’tis God whom
we descry!

“The light that never was on sea
or land!”

Poet, dear poet, thanks that thou
mak'st me see

In contrary one light on every
hand :

God! make it one to me as 'tis from
thee!

Soothly I ken that he who made
the eye

Doth feed it with divine refulgency ;
Eke he that made the ear makes it
espy

In its own way that same divinity ;
And he who makes the heart, and
throbs of heart,

Doth nourse it with that same voice
and gleam ;

And he who gave us thoughts, gives
for their part

Th' enlightenment where planets
sing and beam.

All lights are one in thee, who
being mine,

Eke one I know them because I
am thine.

IV.

95

“The light that never was on sea
or land!”

Nay, vouch me why the little flowers
like bells

In campaniles tall their mouths ex-
pand,

But that of sight atoned with voice
it tells!

Sound is a light and light a very
sound.

What matter if He speak to ear or
eye,

The words are one; yea, sweet
thoughts are compound

O' the light that drips the bowls of
earth and sky.

Let day come as it will, noisy or
stilled,

And night come as it may, cloudy
or bright, —

What 's dim or clear or clamor or
hush is filled

In sea and land and soul with one
self light.

There never were two fires, one
soul's, one earth's;

Sea-beams, land-beams, be Heaven's
sweet brim of mirths.

O C T O B E R

V.

96

O, soul o' me, how were it any-
where,
"The light that never was on sea or
land?"
Lo, earth is bright and wonderfully
fair,
With floral beauty plumed on every
hand,
And flies in space like Bird of Para-
dise
On pinions brighter than the rainy
bow.
Is there a lofty light of lordly rise
Above sea shores, that will not stoop
so low?
Nay, this I know, that all the light
of earth
Sprinkled on hill-tops and on seas
abroad,
Is one with glories that in soul have
birth,
And light 'tis of the countenance of
God.
God! earthly light unheaven'd is
naught to me,
Nor thought or love unearthlike
ought to thee!

VI.*

97

They that go down unto the sea
in ships,
And in great waters to their business
keep,
These do behold the works o' the
Lord — their lips
Cannot refrain his wonders in the
deep.
For he commands and raiseth the
stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the mighty waves
again;
They mount unto the heavens, till he
rescind;
Then go they down into the depths
again.
Souls melt with fear. The storm
then calmeth he,
So that the mighty waves thereof
are still;
Then are they glad because they
quiet be, —
He brings them to a haven where
they will.
What "light there never was on
sea or land"
Sure is small fellow of this fair
and grand!

*Ps. cvii. 23-30.

O C T O B E R

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VII.

I've seen the heavens in April all
a-fire,
Rainy with iris, with opals stringing
th' air,
The skies pied like the sampler of a
dyer,
Birds sipping sunshine,— wi' the sun
their ditties fare.
Eftsoon the waters of the upper sea
Soundly wash down, a-breaking to
lovely spray ;
Anon the sun looseth his jollity,
O'er-smiling the showers ; and so
'tis every day.
If so the vernal heavens be song-full
light,
Behold how 'tis i' the dear diurnal
earth ;
There new-loosed brooks along pour
song-beam bright, —
Light's tune, tune's light, calls th'
other with sweet mirth.
If with such voice-full light the
earth be fraught,
Sure "light that 's ne'er on sea or
land" is naught !

VIII.

99

Full often have I seen a glorious
robe
Apparel the earth with perfect end-
less white,
Making each bush a velvet stud or
lobe,
Wi' the same stuff covered as the
raiment bright.
Methought th' immaculate splendor
were enough ;
But when the hours opened the ward
o' the west,
There hung th' horizon of soft green
and buff,
A spangled girdle for the snowy vest.
O, heart o' me, how hath the dear
bard spoken
O' "the light that never was on sea
or land ?"
Here 's the white-shining seamless
robe unbroken,
Which God hath hasped with yon
gold emerald band.
If there be light more precious
than here seen,
'Tis better light than Love is, as I
ween.

IX.

I think that light is God, and God
is light,
And love is light, and every light is
love.
Light was the first God-word,
athwart the night
When th' Spirit moved, moved the
void deep above.
And with that word methinks him-
self was done
Into all light, and evermore 'tis He,
One Lord and Life and Light, etern-
al One,
As ever 'twas, is now, and aye shall
be.
Wherefore, dear poet, I can not say
with thee
"The light that never was on sea or
land;"
For all the many lights are one and
He,
Whether they shine in love or sea
or sand,
I pray for light within to know 't
without,
That 'tis all one, and wraps the
world about.

O C T O B E R

Having spoken so, 'tis just and grateful to witness that Wordsworth, like all the great bards, has said the like in many an illustrious break of beauty familiar to his lovers; but if one view is true, the other can not be. Why this halt of harmony? Should not the tones of a poet, like those of a bell, ring true at every chime?

101

Have I wandered far from October? Nay, only wandered some circles in its light. 'Tis a short traverse home to it, to its glorious finishing of all the warm transaction from bud to leaf and blossom since March, of April's opening to beauty and fragrance and the wing-flight of bloom, of the Summer's forming fruit and its mellowing for ready hands, — all ending in October's assembly of the royal dynasties of the leaves arrayed in pomp of scarlet and gold, and then the new bud, happed up and armored against the winter, under the shadowed and disappearing arc. Rapt with this splendor of October, I besought the Spirit of Song to vouch-

O C T O B E R

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safe me to catch some music from the days; and the Spirit gave me to hear and repeat this :

S O N G .



L A T E did the precious Gentian
open her lid, to look
Up through her eyes' soft fringes
high
Into the blue,
'That she might view
The azure rondure of the sky,
Whence Nature th' sapphire pig-
ment for her beauty took.

Then had the summer's other
blossoming beings run
The way of flowery things, and
fled
Into the air,
When forth this fair,
This marveled fringed cerulean,
sped,
To wake in us again the glory that
was done.

Yet still some earlies linger, breath-
ing summer and spring,

O C T O B E R

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To show with what reluctance
sweet
Earth spares the flowers;
Here still the bowers
Of Honeysuckle, Cardinal, Laurel;
hearts greet
Herb Robert, and still to the ruddy
soil Pale Violets cling.

Meanwhile the fields are golden-
shock'd, and a meadowy yellow
Through all the fruitful earth doth
shoot,
And atmosphere,
As if the clear
Gold air itself were a round fruit;
And rich therewith is poured the
purple vintage mellow.

Aladdin's deeds were naught to yon-
der flaming tree,
Whose leaves turn jewels ruby and
gold,
Rainbows of dyes;
And when our eyes
Great hill-sides blazing so behold,
Could vaster hanging tapestries of
colors be?

O C T O B E R

October beautiful, radiant, more than
maiden-fair,
Lovely height o' the year's mid-age,
Both rich and sweet,
Thy matron feet
Walk with a beauty large and sage;
But youthful round thy head blows
summer's amber air.

105

NOVEMBER



IS not the circling pathway of the months as notably and variously beautiful in song-tracery as in the rich and changing ranks of floral processions? Surely the sound-harmonies of each quatrain of weeks may be as ranging and distinct as its nature by heat and cold, by sky and air investitures. A medley of the bird-notes prominent in each month would alone carry us through a charmed circle. And when to these is added the swell and beat of the thousand-voiced choir of Nature, the insect tones, concerting of winds and trees with the liquid water-melodies, then indeed opens a great round of seasonal life, our entrance whereinto is conditioned only on that quick-witted hand-maid of the soul, the listening sense.

Given the ear only, and then a place at a theatre of discoursing Nature, who could mistake the shrillings of

February for September mellowings, or July amplitudes for April animations? The range is indeed as vast and various as if in each month a new earth were created and new seas of life were poured into a new sky of sound. There are songs enough, indeed! And if you think nature-sounds be not veritable music, I must remind you of a pretty legend forthwith, that of the grudging and gloomy Sub-prior who awoke to find all the wondrous, rich, rare, beauty-bloom of his fair Minster bursting to a fragrance of rapturous concerted song. The Sub-prior had come on a cold night and had prostrated himself on the cold stones of the floor, in a mood of surly gloom which he mistook for piety. While bewailing the sin of a fallen and ruined earth, as he deemed it, he fell asleep, and then was awakened by light flooding the chapel and therewith wonderful song. When he looked he saw all the things in the chapel singing. The little carved cherubs of the choir and the stately

N O V E M B E R

window saints were caroling together. The carved faces on the oaken pews joyfully caught up the strains, even the splendid vestment-jewels flashed their color and light into song, and every corner of the radiant old Abbey shared in the great Antiphon. So outpoured the glad harmonious praise! And thereupon the astonished Sub-prior bethought him of the eyes that see not and the ears that hear not.

If so be that this legend is really a truth, and all things in nature are singing, why then, when man is not listening thereto or singing, he alone of all earth's beings joins not in the harmony. But he does join therein sometimes, and forthwith from beings formed to see, to hear, to know, to think, to feel, arise vast harmonies soul-stirred and wrung forth. Earth with all its creatures hath its Advent Song, its Resurrection Hymn, its Psalm of Thanksgiving, its Carol of Hope, its glorious Te Deum, and its cheerful Nunc Dimittis. So falls it that November, as she closes the doors of a full granary, must needs "break forth

N O V E M B E R

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into singing, " lifting heart and voice
in a fervor of praise.

A stirring in me of the joy of the
Thanksgiving Festival forced way at
my mouth one day, thus :

When I bethink me what skies are,
and lands,
And all the creatures both are rife
withal,
And my dear occupancy by com-
mands
Of the one Lord who daily makes it
all,
Then do I know what a tremendous
gift
To me my life is, and it doth be-
hoove me
To raise me to that contemplation,
lift
My heart, and let the heavens move
me ;
And I perceive how measureless the
debt
That 's laid on me, that if with all
my powers
I make return, O, still it is not
met —

N O V E M B E R

I cannot pay for life with all life's
hours.

113

Lord, help me! I would not be too
much debtor,
But somewhat pay by loving all
things better!

I remember not surely how it hap-
pened that this sufficed me not; yet
I have some dim recollection that
the last line of it took possession of
me, namely, the thought of the loving
of everything as a way of paying for
everything, and the only way; out of
which after some days came the fol-
lowing:

Our Lord, how helpless am I to
repay
The marvels of thy gifts! Can I by
thinking
Reckon for the power of thought?
Or by my winking
Refund the eyes' marvel? By such
a way
The charges of thy mighty gifts
defray —
O' the sea by merry swimming, rising,
sinking,

N O V E M B E R

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O' the sweet rainy streams by of
them drinking,
Of green tree-skies if under them I
stay ?
Payeth the hirer hire who doth no
more
Than shrewdly use a beautiful ma-
chine ?
How then retribute I with reason
better ?
Lord of these goodly hosts round me
and o'er,
Grant me th' one wherewithal —
sweet love, I ween,
To pay sweet love, so be not all a
debtor !

The November out-pouring of praise seemeth not unlike a great Recessional in the year's choral service. Rich and full as if plenty-blest it rises, then slowly softens to gentle memories and forward hopes, until at length from behind closed doors, rising from blazing hearths, comes a clear "Amen !"

It being due from me on a certain time to hand forth a song of Novem-

N O V E M B E R

ber and Thanksgiving, one day I
cried out in my need, thus :

115

Spirit of Thankfulness, prythee come
unto me !

Spirit of Song, prythee see what is
done to me

Here in this noise in the world !

O, there be joys in the world,

Mid the jargon and noise

There be quietts and joys

That will stay with me long

And will grow in me strong!

Bring them, dear Spirit of Song!

So entreated came the kind Spirit of
Song to me very quickly, nay, delay-
ing not a moment, and caught me by
the hair and held me even by hair and
beard, and whispered eagerly, "Write
what I chant to thee"; which I did,
and so received the following :

S O N G .



THE bright procession of the blossoms hath passed by ;
The gold and purple rear
Doth vanishing appear —
Sparse stragglers from th' October
flanks

Of Summer's army, where in
ranks

They sang to the winds as never car-
nivals nor symphonies outvie.

Now fields are yellow-hillocked with
golden fruits :

The mighty succulent gourd,
With rich, ripe round matured,
Shineth twixt many a saffron
shock

Where husks are soon stripped
to unfrock

The ear whose ruddy-orange color
wi' glow o' the lordly pompion
suits.

N O V E M B E R

Then comes mid-month the lovely
Indian Summer new,
Whose melting golden haze
Copies the fruity blaze
O' the field, and the bland airs
and sky
Retune the heart wi' old singer's
cry :

117

“Hath the rain a father, or who hath
begotten the drops of dew?”

O th' bounty and the beauty,
The grain and vine !
The harvest is ingathered,
Corn, oil and wine ;
And it hath all been fathered
With love divine !
The ice-wind will be weathered,
Where hearth-fires shine
Upon the bounty and beauty,
The grain and vine !

'Tis a short and speedy way from
field to house and home ;
Crops seem to skip to table
As in a fairy fable,
And in the winking of an eye
The flushing pompion in a pie

N O V E M B E R

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Sets many a heart a-flame, and to the
homestead bringeth feet that
roam.

Eke fruits and frosts together usher
us indoors,
And fiery hearths foretell
Still ruddier wintry spell—
Both a sounding and a shining
note
I' the chimney's hospitable throat,
That crimsons all the mirthful com-
pany wi' its bonny blazing roars.

Thus back November looks to com-
fortable sun,
And forward with desires
To frost-becharming fires ;
And passeth cider cups about
In loving harvest-merry rout :
And aye this thrice-bedowered season
singeth thus when it is done :

O th' bounty and the beauty,
The grain and vine !
The harvest is ingathered,
Corn, oil and wine ;

N O V E M B E R

And it hath all been fathered
With love divine!

119

The ice-wind will be weathered,
Where hearth-fires shine
Upon the bounty and beauty,
The grain and vine!

DECEMBER



“There is a river in the ocean” — so begins a book which has much to say of the Gulf Stream, a river whose banks are walls of salt water. There is a climate prevailing in all other climates, like a river running in the midst of them — so might one begin a page or a book treating of December; for the Christmastide is a climate everywhere. No matter how variously December hath one nature in the north and another in the south, or may change with east and west, Christmas is the same and brings its own temperature and quality; whereby, though every other month has altogether a different climate in different places, December hath a unity everywhere, which overrides without account all bars of parallels or meridians.

The cause of this one climate in all climates is Jesus of Nazareth. Here is a great potency, wonder and glory, that he irrigates all climates with one

climate. And what means had he? None visible. He was very poor; he came from obscure peasant stock; the dates of his birth and death, year, month, day, are unknown; he was visible publicly but one or two years, or possibly barely three, out of his thirty three; he was disowned by his own family and towns-folk; he was scorned by the proud, hated by the rich, hunted by the powerful; he was a wanderer, without station or any seat of influence; he was decried as a pretender and denounced as unreligious or irreligious; perhaps he was almost as little understood by friends as by enemies; and he was put to death suddenly and riotously on a cruel gallows reserved for slaves and felons. "What pleasure did he taste?" cries out Isaac Barrow. "What inclination, what appetite, what sense did he gratify? How did he feast or revel? How but in tedious fastings, in frequent hungers, by passing whole nights in prayer and retirement for devotion upon the cold mountains? What sports had he, what recreation did he

take, but feeling incessant gripes of compassion, and wearisome roving in quest of the lost sheep? In what conversation could he divert himself, but among those whose doltish incapacity and froward humor did wring from his patience these words, ‘How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?’ What music did he hear? What but the rattlings of clamorous obloquy, and furious accusations against him? To be desperately maligned, to be insolently mocked, to be styled a king and treated as a slave, to be spit on, to be buffeted, to be scourged, to be drenched with gall, to be crowned with thorns, to be nailed to a cross, — these were the delights which our Lord enjoyed, these the sweet comforts of his life and the notable prosperities of his fortune!” Yet the spiritual heavens in him have spread their one climate “like a tent to dwell in” over all weathers of the earth, and that one climate is hope, faith, cheer and joy!

The climate which is Christmastide, moreover, waiteth not for its month

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or season to prevail, but may be spread over all the year. Nay, there is no health for us unless all the year be Christmased, that is, over-climated with his spirit who hath made the climate called Christmas. But also the special observance of the season by loving gifts between all manner of lovers, and also unto the poor, whom sorrowfully yet we "have always with us," this may spread the climate all over the year; for one does well who takes a full year to provide his Christmas gifts, and is on watch for them, and happily stores them up. I was witness of the method of St. Matilda, she who was canonized by the great preacher Theodore. She placed in the attic of her home a row of boxes, all nicely disposed, with the cover of each box laid by it very orderly, and right generous they looked, and every box was labeled with the name of some friend. Then whenever throughout the year she obtained any good thing which might be a good gift, she placed it in the box dedicated to whatsoever friend she thought

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the good thing fitted. At Christmas-tide the boxes were full, or soon completed, and so forwarded.

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Gifts in token of love have a rich and ancient warrant, even Sacred Scripture, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and in truth." We shall not interpret the word "deed" without including gifts, if we remember that benefactions in love are meritorious in proportion to their cost to us, which is to say, what we sacrifice for them, denying or even pinching ourselves to do them; and assuredly if we bestow what in truth costs us nothing, we are not liberal of our own, but of God's. "How can that gift leave a trace which hath left no void?" saith a French-woman; and another, an English woman, hath it, "One must be poor to know the luxury of giving," — which if true (and what heart echoes not to it?) means that no gift rises to a greatness, and no bestowal hath any love-glory, unless it takes a virtue out of us and makes us in a way poor for the time. Therefore gifts, besides

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words, always have been notable love-vehicles, and thus are natural to Christmastide. Yet a gift, and even a costly gift, means not always a purchaseable object. There be very chargeable and expensive gifts which are efforts, devotions of time and strength, plans, letters, thoughts, verses. A letter well-written, full of excellent thoughts or of love-eloquences, things not to be plucked from bushes or picked up in streets, may be a very costly gift, with one's very self spun into it. Let it be said too, and very heartily, that current small gifts exceed occasional large ones; ten things at a dime are more than one at a dollar, three thirds are more than a whole in these measures. April rains (I mean reiterated) of small attentions, little pleasures, inventions, ingenuities, are very fertilizing to love, and they cost much in thought. And this other principle above all lives in fine giving, namely, that the amercement which love requires of itself, disowns all limit. If I have given joyful moments all day long, and at evening

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I can bestow one little last delight of more, I must, or I fail. "O, the little more, and how much it is, and the little less, and what worlds away!" "High heaven disdains the lore of nicely calculated less or more!" There is a very fine oriental saying, "If a man will build a mountain and he put one basket-full of earth on the plain, he is building a mountain; but if he put not the last basket-full on the top, he has not builded the mountain." 'Tis so in love.

129

Verse, as I have said, if to compose it be vouchsafed to one, is an excellent Christmas gift, and will be very acceptable to the recipient if he consider how much his friend's being goes into it. 'Tis a kindred fact that always Christmastide hath been a rich summoner of songs of itself, as much as April, or May, or June, or roses. Carols naturally cluster around Christmas in the courts of all languages, like holy revelers in the audiences of a Saint King. Of our store of English Christmas Carols what can be said that is great enough and rich enough

and warm enough! How they lead us to the time and the place, and hang over it to show what is there, like multiplications of the star in the east. This is the overbrooding and revealing office of song. Suddenly one day I perceived, as it seemed to me with a special light, that verily no great knowledge is possible without the ministry of song, and I exclaimed with the thought thus:

Glorious Song, dear Poesy, me-thinks

I see thee stand on verge of fairest star,

And thence thy spirit the mighty prospect drinks,

And round thee flasks of all the colors are.

Now, when thou spyest a deed on any earth,

Thou dashest it wi' the colors of its kind;

Be it or good or bad, or grief or mirth,

Its hue 's unknown till tintured to thy mind:

D E C E M B E R

Be it of life or death or love or
hate,
Imagination, reason, might, night,
light,
Honor or shame, or rich or poor
estate,
Till of thee dyed, 'tis naught but
ashy sight.
O Song, Saint Spirit, from thy
verge above,
Truth-dye all things for me, but
most my love!

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“The rest may reason and welcome,
'tis we musicians know,” saith Abt
Vogler; but poesy is of a piece with
music, and there is no reality of
knowledge, nor doth anything unveil
its depth, till Song hath explored it.

There be alien times that “know
not Joseph,” when noble poesy is
neglected, and men will not pay
“victuals and drink” for it. To be a
soothsayer where there are no sim-
ple hearts and no one cares for the
“sooth” hath its difficulties; and it
might seem that God could do nothing
so merciless as to create a poet in

an un-poesy-loving time. But no, 'tis not so, and of this we may be assured; for song is so great rapture in itself, and so great illumination of everything, and so vast independence, unmoved even with the neglect of it, that to be made a poet is a great mercy!

So, steeped in Christmastide, what could I have of it without song? Blessed be the old carols, by which, singing them merrily with rapturous children, and rightwisely looking afar back over the many years, even if "often glad no more, we wear a face of joy because we have been glad of yore!" But might not a new carol break, as every day hath its morning? And might not the song of my own soul show me somewhat the songs of others had not? "Ah, draw me out of myself into thee!" I cried to the dear Christmastide; "Spirit of Song, I pray thee, give me a carol!" Then the Spirit (I always have found the Spirit ready with more than was thought or prayed) gave me many carols, as here they follow:

C A R O L S .

I.

O, Christ was born a little babe,
· A little babe was he,
In manger laid was he,
Who was to live for all the world
And die for you and me:
Then wreathe the holly,
Twine the bay,
Girls and boys and gentles all,
Sing holy-happy Christmas lay,
And "Nowell" sing and "well-
a-day,"
That angel song again may fall,
As round the manger and the stall,
To bless this merry Christmas.

O, Christ became a little lad,
A little lad was he,
And in the temple he,
Who was to preach to all the world,
And speaks to you and me:

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Then wreathe the holly,
Twine the bay,
Girls and boys and gentles all,
Sing holy-happy Christmas lay,
And "Nowell" sing and "well-
a-day,"

That angel song again may fall,
As round the manger and the stall,
To bless this merry Christmas.

Now Christ be born in every heart,
In every heart to be,
That each a temple be,
And he who saves the wide-wide world
May save both you and me:

Then wreathe the holly,
Twine the bay,
Girls and boys and gentles all,
Sing holy-happy Christmas lay,
And "Nowell" sing and "well-
a-day,"

That angel song again may fall,
As round the manger and the stall,
To bless this merry Christmas.

II.

A little child peeped through the sky,
Long ago, long ago,
And said, I will come down from high,
Long ago :
It was the child, the dear Christ child,
Who nestled to the earth and to his
mother mild.

He said to angels, Come and sing
To men below, men below,
Because glad tidings I shall bring
To men below :
It was the child of God who spake,
And with the tidings still the listening
world doth quake.

He said unto the traveling star,
Show the way, show the way,
For I to all both near and far
Will show the way :
And still by that same holy light
The traveling nations struggle onward
day and night.

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He saith to us, With ivy trim,
With holly and bay, holly and bay,
Make green the house. We will for
him,
With holly and bay :
And here in manger still thou art,
O dear and sweet Christ child, which
manger is our heart.

III.

Now carols bring and carols sing,
And all the holy story tell
How Jesus loved the world so well
And loved so well the world !
Sad that men will each other kill,
And spears be hurled and swords be
whirled,
Since Jesus loved the world so well
And loved so well the world.
Now let all gentle hearts be gay,
Kindle the hearth, the house array,
Bring ivy and holly, bring holly and
bay,
With praise on high and peace on
earth this Christmas day !

'Tis day of day, 'tis sky of sky,
'Tis light of light and very heaven of
heaven,

When Christmastide awakes the eye
With beams from far beyond the
shining seven :

And eke 'tis song of song
Then doth to ear belong,
And lifts the soul above
With chant of praise and love!

O, fetch the holly, wreathe the bay,
And twine around the ivy gay,
To light with evergreens the day,
And deck our holy Christmas.

The wondrous child, the sacred
mother,
Fill with a golden light the stable low,
And e'en the kine on one another
Look with astonished eyes to see the
glow.

The shadowy rafters ring
With song the seraphs sing,
And voice of beast and man
Make answer all they can.

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138

O, fetch the holly, wreathe the bay,
And twine around the ivy gay,
With sunny verdure bower the day,
And deck our holy Christmas.

What though a star, as now none
are,
Traversed the heavens with new
created beam
To guide the wise men from afar,
Doth this too much for that dear advent
seem?

The soul hath said, Not so;
The heart it crieth, No,—
Though all the skies should wake
With new stars for his sake!

O, fetch the holly, wreathe the bay,
And twine around the ivy gay,
With golden green festoon the day,
And deck our holy Christmas.

But not far off, nay, now in heart
Let the sweet stories have their being
mild,

Nor from our souls may e'er dispart
The light, the star, wise men and
heavenly child,

D E C E M B E R

139

The shepherds on the plains
Hearkening th' angelic strains,
The kine, the manger lowly,
The wondering mother holy.
O, fetch the holly, wreathe the bay,
And twine around the ivy gay,
To hang them round the neck o' the
day,
And deck our holy Christmas.

Nor this alone, but round the world
This day wherever Christmastide is
preached
Away may strifes and hates be
hurled,
By each for all may be sweet love
beseeched;
And th' angels' song again
Ravish the hearts of men,
And from the heavens fall—
"Praise God, and peace to all!"
O, fetch the holly, wreathe the bay,
And twine around the ivy gay,
To bring inside the outside day,
And deck our holy Christmas.

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V.

Behold how fall at Christmastide
Divers things together :
The heart is warm to love and pray,
Though 'tis wintry weather.
Lo, the earth 's a-cold,
Winds be rough and bold,
When this story 's told—
Hearts nor chill nor old!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holiy,
the holly and bay,
And lovingly, joyously, merrily
sing, 'tis Christmas day!

Behold the persons of the poor
Round the little stranger,
The while the rich bring spice and
myrrh
To the lowly manger.
Poor and rich are one,
Strife is hushed and done,
Peace on earth begun,
Naught to hate or shun!
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly,
the holly and bay,
And joyfully, mirthfully, gratefully
sing, 'tis Christmas day!

D E C E M B E R

And lo, the wise together come
With the rough and wild,
The magi with the silly swains
Kneel before the child.

141

'Tis not wit or art,
Nor the dull or smart,
But the child-like heart
Finds the heavenly part!

O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly,
the holly and bay,
And heartfully, faithfully, praisefully
sing, 'tis Christmas day!

Now happy light and happy dark
Mingle over them ;
At night 's the birth, but shines the
bright
Star of Bethlehem.
Ever hold thy station
In us, bright creation,
Star of Revelation,
Star of sweet Salvation !

O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly,
the holly and bay,
And happily, blissfully, fervently
sing, 'tis Christmas day.

D E C E M B E R

142

And see, together come the earth
And the heavens lighted,
The angels and their heavenly beams
Flood the plains benighted.
Joy, that high and low
Seek the Christ-child so !
Earth and heaven go,
All the loving know !
O, up with the ivy, the ivy and holly,
the holly and bay,
Forever and ever and ever to
sing, 'tis Christmas day !

VI.

Now carol, gentles, gentles all,
'Tis holy Christmas Day,
And when this holy tide doth fall,
Let every heart be gay,
And every good soul pray,
In cottage or in hall !

For ivy, groweth every year,
The ivy bay and holly grow,
And every year the birth of Christ
Converteth heart to manger low.
Then up with the ivy, the ivy and
holly, the holly and bay,
And carol, carol every one, 'tis
Christmas Day !

D E C E M B E R

O, carol, gentles, gentles all,
That Jesus lived and died ;
Ye old or young or great or small,
Carol the Christmastide
Where'er ye be or bide,
In field or wood or wall !

143

For ivy groweth, etc.

O, carol, gentles, gentles free,
The night the angels sang
And shepherds hurried for to see
Why all the music sprang :
Then earthly good will rang,
And glory heavenly !

For ivy groweth, etc.

O, carol, gentles, gentles brave,
The Christ a little child,
The stall, the kine, the stable-cave,
The holy mother mild,
Who on the infant smiled
That all the world should save !

For ivy groweth, etc.

D E C E M B E R

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O, carol, gentles, gentles kind,
The wise men and the kings,
And the new star that out hath shined
And them to manger brings ;
And round the earth it flings
Sweet light to every mind !

For ivy groweth, etc.

Now carol, gentles, gentles fair,
Loud carol all the earth,
And let the Christ-song ring the air,
And ring the heart to mirth
This tide of holy birth
That breaketh everywhere !

For ivy groweth, etc.

JANUARY



“A Happy New Year—I take my text from the lips of men!” ’Twas so I heard the poet-preacher, Samuel Longfellow, begin a sermon. Then he went on in his discourse by this method, namely, first asking why we should not be happy, and whether for this reason, or for this other reason, or still for this other cause, or again for yet another hap or chance; and then the preacher gave reasons why none of these causes should destroy happiness; and after that, he continued his discourse by counting and portraying many kind and gracious Providential things from which we may glean happiness always, if we will; and so the sermon was builded. In the first part of it I remember the preacher said, “Why should we not be happy? Is it because of difficult things we must do, hard tasks to be surmounted, strenuous labors to be met? And have we not learned that

always we may prevail over the strong difficulty, and when we have prevailed its strength passes into us?" 'Twas much more than a half century ago that I heard the sermon, and yet I remember it well, and often run back to its light, and I behold still with what a joyful manner the preacher spoke, as if a breeze were playing around his head and making æolian music with his long, light, wavy hair.

A Happy New Year!—a good text for the church, and a lovely, loving, recurrent annual greeting. In that time more than fifty years back, that greeting made a great festival yearly. Well I remember it in Dutch New York, and all its preparations. For many days beforehand, the family, and especially the father and mother, held consultation to make out the list of calls, from which none must be forgotten, even if only hovering over some tender margin of acquaintance. Then, on the day before, there was great baking and brewing, and the bringing in of fruits and delicate kickshaws. On the New Year morn-

ing the family was early astir, long before light. Breakfast was taken by lamp or candle. Then the dining room was cleared and garnished, and a large table spread handsomely, and loaded with things from which a very substantial and goodly repast could be chosen, and these were replenished continually throughout the day till late into the night, so that the board never lost its festal and newly-arrayed look. At nine o'clock in the morning my father sallied forth in his sleigh, armed with his list of calls well arranged in divisions according to streets and numbers ; and at the same hour the callers began to come, and my mother was in lovely array to receive them. On the departure of every guest, his name was punctiliously entered on a list, for which a pencil and paper were kept at hand on the mantle-shelf. At noon home came my father with a rush becoming the mighty business of the hour. Came he home for food? No, he found tables everywhere, and he knew how to time his calls in such manner as to

bring up at dinner-time at some old friend's house where he could partake intimately at his good pleasure. Or came he home by reason of weariness? No, he was still as strong as a lion. He came solely to examine my mother's list of calls, to make sure that he should not fail to call on any lady whose husband or son had called on my mother. Forth he went again with a manner of wild eagerness, and with the same rush he came home again at about six or seven o'clock in the evening to correct once more his list by my mother's, and very likely again at nine o'clock; and finally he came home at ten or eleven o'clock triumphant, with happy sense of a fine old custom well sustained, and no omissions made nor aught on the horizon of acquaintance overlooked. As I grew unto suitable age, even while yet but an unsociable boy, I was trotted forth into the festival with my father, and those were proud days. The kindly custom has gone the way of many other old-fashioned excellencies—more is the pity.

J A N U A R Y

A Happy New Year!—'Tis a reasonable greeting. For happiness much resembles climate; it may be likened to the weather-record of a year. One winter is called summerish; again, a summer, winterish; but those who attend to it carefully tell us that always the year comes in its cycle to the fullness of its own, constantly having the due and right totals of heat and of cold in the twelve months. Now as the years are compounded of many changeable things, yet never lack similar complexions one with another, so belike it is with happiness, which hath many variable clouds, yet fails not in the annual round to attain its dues of sunshine.

153

There be short days,
There be long days,
But one is all the year;
There be soft skies,
There be rough skies,
But in th' unaltered clear:
And the year and the clear are the
heart's stay while days and skies
are passing.

J A N U A R Y

154

There be glad sighs,
There be sad sighs,
But life 's the same at end ;
There be soothed ways,
There be hard ways,
But none without a friend :
And the end and the friend are the
heart's stay while sighs and ways
are passing.

There be fleet streams,
There be slow streams,
But all to the Infinite Main ;
There be things lost,
There be loves lost,
But all once had is gain :
And the Main and the gain are the
heart's stay while streams and
things are passing.

There be old years,
And the NEW YEAR !
And the East is one with the West ;
To the old, Hail !
To the new, Hail !
And with God be all the rest :
And the West and the rest are the
full heart's stay while old and new
are passing.

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A Happy New Year!—But bethink thee that happiness is not a happening —“roasted larks falling into the mouth.” Happiness comes of discipline, right thinking and right doing, and both of them steadily.

The New Year is no more seasonable for beginning any good thing than any other season is, but all are opportune. The time to begin a good thing is on the moment when we see it to be good, and it calls to us. But the New Year is a good time to bethink us to continue all good things that heretofore we have begun. For it is easy to begin, but hard to continue. “Be not weary in well doing,” is wise, shrewd Scripture, and “in due time we shall reap *if* we faint not.” In reading I would put the stress on that little word, the *If*. It signifies how likely we are to grow weary—the more if the reaping or the reward be delayed, as very often it is, and we be stuffed with the notion of reward, as very often we are.

'Tis easy to meet any great tax once. The second time, it is no little harder. The fourth and fifth time, it begins to

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be heroic. The tenth time it calleth for a "veray parfit gentil knight," and the hundredth time it is the virtue of the Saint.

What is there in life, save indolence, that hath not the grain of it tried by continuance? 'Tis sweet to fall in love; but to continue in love is discipline. To fall into it is a happy and easy letting go, as if one softly glide into delicious warm waters; but warm waters will strangle as surely as cold unless we have the discipline of the swimmer—which is an art, to be learned; and so is loving, by thought and care, by prayer and practice. 'Tis so with all things worth doing, all noble labors; they are easy to begin, or do once, but hard to continue. Yet this virtue, that we "be not weary in well doing," is easier to a real love than to any other powers, and this, methinks, is a most heavenly fact, full of happiness for us.

Therefore at the setting forth of the New Year, it is good time for us to set forth anew and reassure ourselves in this strenuosity, the "being not

weary in well doing." As to reward, continuance is able to be its own reward; for it groweth to be a dignity of mind, which is the greatest cheer and solace. Also it arriveth at great strength, and to be strong is great happiness. Here comes forward love again, as great joy because so unwearying. Love falters not even when confronting death, and this is an extreme blessedness.

Thought saith, "Alas, I tire :
I fail—I can no longer count :
There is no end behind or fore,
'Tis double darkness I explore :
Like twinkling flames the moments
mount :"

Thought saith, "Alas, I tire."

Love saith, "*I* weary not,—
Tiptoe the darkness fearlessly :
As glints of flame the moments
mount ;

I follow—blissfully I count,
And I can reckon endlessly :"

Love saith, "*I* weary not."

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Love, I take part with thee :
The seasons run from night to night ;
But I can reckon endlessly,
From dark to dark look fearlessly :
'Tis the New Year, the glad, the bright:
Love, I take part with thee !

A Happy New Year!—"In the abundance of the heart," which is all my wealth, I have found a hymn of this blissful greeting. If, since no man can have all riches, that one is richest who hath the best riches, then am I among the most fortunate. For how much more affluent is he who possesseth little stuff, but much heart to bestow it withal, than he who hath great substance but little love.

"I've brought thee an ivy-leaf, only an ivy-leaf," saith an old song. Only an ivy-leaf—as if one should say, *Only* a work of God! In like manner I bring a song, only my little song. But—a song! For Who is it giveth us to sing? So offer I this song of the greeting, A Happy New Year :

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A Glad New Year unto my friends,
And eke from them to me!
But well I know I find no joy
Till joy to them I be :

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And well I know my well-beloved,
My loves and friends, can taste
No joy themselves till they with joy
Their little world have graced :

And well I know each little world
Of neighborhood and few,
Joys not, till they with some like joy
The earth's one world endue :

And well I know the earth's one world
Is sad, till all abroad
It be worth joy for all the worlds
That roll i' the love of God.

What shall we pray, this Glad New
Year,
But this, that Happy We
Each in his part may Happy make
These holy regions three :

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Which be one's own, then neighbor-
hood,
And then the world away ;
Mayhap at last—sweet mystic bond!—
All worlds in God that play.

A Happy New Year!—On the bosom
of this gentle greeting, while a coming
New Year “cast its shadow before,”
I fell into a fanciful reverie, and had
this vision :

My Soul and I set forth on a walk, or
rather on a short path in a long
wayfaring. 'Twas early in the morn-
ing, at the dim hour of dawn. We
walked in a small plain, amid all the
objects that dress the meadows with
loveliness, and before us was a hill,
a pleasant slope, wearing a green
garment and a brown cap with green
plumes of cedar. We walked along
with much merry and some merry-
sober converse. For

My soul and I are fellow travelers
good
That talk not of each other, but
commune
Of what we see i' the air and field
and wood ;

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Nor what we speak not think we of,
nor croon
Sickly unto ourselves about ourselves,
But jaunt along with eye-light and a
tune,—

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Singing of birds and brooks, of girls
(sweet elves),
Of boys and loves, of hearth-fires red
and bright,
And yellow furrows where the yeoman
delves.

These be what flood my Soul and
me with light.

Then said my Soul looking at the hill,
Yonder is the New Year; we must
climb to the top of the dawn of it, or
rather, go airily up, for 'tis an easy
green path; and from the top there
are long grand prospects, eastward
and westward, in seeing which we
shall revel much, belike sing of them.
Then we ascended, and looked first
westward. Behold the many past
years, said I. No, said my Soul.

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Past years? Not so. What's past
unto our Lord?

Nay, what is past unto the soul o' me?
Are fountains past when in the ocean
stored?

Of flowery springs have brooks no
memory,
Or doth the river cease to be the
brook,
Or when extinct are rivers in the sea?

Nay, but the runnel holds the bubbling
nook,
And eke the river chronicles the rill,
Nor more are all in the wide main
forsook.

So the dear years part not from me,
nor will.

Behold, said my Soul, where we are.
Look not westward nor eastward, but
overhead and round about our feet.
What can we look for that is not here?
What that is green and yellow, rich,
food-full, lightsome, more than these
things? Or what more grand and
glorious than is overhead?

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For this I tell thee, this thy Soul
doth say,
That here or nowhere is the richest
loam
Creation's angels on the granite lay.

For let be what it may, it is thy home;
And let be what it may, that it thou
till
Thou hast come hither and hast hither
clomb.

And here the honey-heavy rains do
spill,
And here the glory of the sun 's thy
creed,
And sky-enriched soils with riches
fill.

Ay, seek and find!—that is thy only
need.

Now said I to my Soul, What is this
to the eastward? 'Tis a great sight,
'tis a mighty heavens, but 'tis dim,
neither day-light nor darkness. And
yet I see stars persevering, and plainly
sprinkled all over it; yea, and a
glorious, tenderly gleaming, beautiful

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roadway, like as a bed of crystal
sea-sand. And my Soul answered,
That is the New Year, the whole sky
thereof, whose up-streaming from the
horizon we behold.

Look forth with un-self-thinking
eye, and see
Where the east-rising year is a dim
sky
Thick with a milky-way of hours for
thee :

And lo, the constellated lights enriched
hard by
That wide white path, and th' indefat-
igable pole,
Great stars of great occasions for the
eye !

O, memory 's bare and savage to my
soul,
Till Love and Faith array me as a
dress,
And to Who joyed the past I trust
the whole.

The Old enriched doth th' New most
richly bless.

Ay, said I to my Soul, but there are more years. Yes, said my Soul, no end of years. No end is a long end, said I. 'Tis the only thing that is long, said my Soul, for "nothing is really long that ends at all." With this my Soul and I talked of Life and Death, of the mortal and the unmortal. For, said my Soul, "the healthy soul desires to live," and that desire hath a promise in it, because 'tis health.

Like sunrise on the dim vault of a
year
Burns the all-future; 'tis faith and
trust,
'Tis hope and joy, peace, health and
wealth and cheer!

It saith unto the feet, Tread ye in dust,
But carry a head in commerce with
the sky,
With all th' unmortal, beautiful and just.

My Soul saith, Tell thyself naught is
too high
To dream of, nor aught too great effect
To look for; health doth refuse to die.
Who can of God too mightily expect?

Then my Soul spake no more of the
unmortal only, but of the eternal,
and recited to me great things,
such as, "The eternal God is our
dwelling-place, and underneath are the
everlasting arms." Then my Soul
sang with a great voice, thus,—and
methought the winds took harps to
accompany him!

"Lift up your heads, ye gates; be ye
up-lift,
Ye everlasting doors!" The King is
come!
His countenance hath scattered Time
and drift.

'Tis still, now! The loud worlds
cease to hum,
The stars of morning have no more
to tell,
And the soul knows, but mouth is
stricken dumb.

"He inhabiteth eternity!" 'Tis well,
'Tis very well with us! O Life! O
God!

"Lift up your heads, ye gates!" *Shema
Yisrael,*

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*Adonoi Elohehu, Adonoi Ehad!**

*The great cry of the Hebrews, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is Our God, the Eternal is One!"

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A Happy New Year! Here I will offer my reader who kindly hath come with me hitherto a New Year Song that was a dream-child. I was sitting late into the New Year's Eve, resolved to "watch the old year out," when I fell asleep; and the Spirit of Song came to me in a dream, and said, My heart is brimming with a lay of the New Year; wouldst like to have it? I flushed my welcome (for I could not speak) and the song was chanted into my ear, and when the Spirit's voice had ceased, like music dying away, I awoke to the last tone of the midnight bell:

S O N G



And O, if I shall tell, my dear,
If I shall tell the time o' year,
The time that giveth most o' cheer,
 And most 's our own,
 And most by love is known,
 What shall it be?

And O, shall it be Spring, my dear,
Shall it be Spring when first a-clear,
When first it shineth far and near,
 And far doth glow,
 And far the zephyrs blow—
 This shall it be?

And O, shall it be June, my dear,
Shall it be June when roses peer,
When roses blooming bright are here
 With bright gay heads
 And bright and various reds—
 This shall it be?

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And O, shall it be Fall, my dear,
Shall it be Fall, when gold the spear,
When gold and brown and ripe the ear,
 And ripe the fruits,
 That ripened Winter suits—
 This shall it be?

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Ah no! Not one nor all, my dear,
Not one nor all, but wintry cheer,
The wintry primal glad New Year,
 When glad the heart
 Doth glad each other's part—
 This shall it be.

For O, th' angelic snow, my dear,
Th' angelic snow, and ice how sheer,
The ice that tinkles frosty clear,
 And frosty fills
 With frosted light the sills
 O' the opening year.

And O, the troops of nuns, my dear,
The troops of nuns that white appear
Where white the picket rows up-rear,
 In rows where snow
 The rows doth now o'er-blow,
 And hood them here.

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And O, the evergreens, my dear,
The evergreens that mock and flear,
That mock at storms, and shine in gear
Of shining ice,
That shining in a trice
Berobes them sheer.

And O, the bare-bough trees, my dear,
The bare-bough trees that are not drear,
But are a shape of grace severe,
Of grace that sky
More graces with a dry,
Bright emerald clear.

And O, the yellow flames, my dear,
The yellow flames on hearth that veer,
On hearth domestic where is cheer,
And where a kiss
And where all human bliss
Hath naught to fear.

Then O, how festal fair, my dear,
How festal fair this time o' year,
This time when hearts o' love sincere
New love employ,
With love say, Here be joy,—
"Happy New Year!"

FEBRUARY



Hail to February, Frost King! Hail to his perfection of hero-making cold! In November Winter announces himself, but he hath not really entered or laid hold. In December he hath come in, but he is a gentle youth who hath much more in him than is yet apparent. In January he hath grown sturdy, but he keeps still a tender memory of his youth, for so I may call the regularly recurring January thaw. In February he comes to the full glory of his polar powers, and showeth us amply what he can do. I care not in what thing there is found perfection, 'tis still perfection, and a glory. I would not envy the man that hath not been envious and transfixed before the perfectness of a lofty tumbler whirling himself like a wheel twice or thrice between a height of ten feet and the ground. February hath this perfectness in cold, and utters such a congealing breath as seems to hang the

unquenchable ruddiness of the morning or twilight with a frosty lace.

'Tis a short and merry turn from the wealthy cold of February to the vaulted and wide-throated house-fire; and especially what engages my heart, and mind is the open fire, whether in the sociable living-room or in a man's own studious cubby-den. As to the beauty of it, this is so common a conclusion that everyone exclaims it, whenever an open fire-place is met, burning wood or coal, and whether hard or soft. But often I have thought of the varied stages, shapes and kinds of beauty which an open fire has, especially the wood and the anthracite. When the wood colors, and mayhap the bubbles of sap are mingled with broad but shallow chars, and with bright flames and rolling smoke, there is one kind of beauty, and very rich, which passes through many degrees to the heap of splendid wood coals, and these again to the gray pearl ash which the fiery spirit has left without rending or tearing it, so that it stays in the shape of the wood, and looks

like the same done by a strange art in powdered stone. So with the anthracite fire; its beauties have as many changes as a chime of bells. First as many colors as may be between a white heat and a quiet, ruddy glow; but this glow, if it be dying away, is one beauty, but if it be sprinkled with black coals, which slowly are kindling, there is another; and this leads to the greatest beauty of the hard coal fire, to my mind, which is a lusty, brilliant fire below, drawn very hot, thence cooling upward to coals just kindling at the top; for then the fire is covered all over with waving tufts and feathers of blue flame, flecked now and then with a yellow flash, or, if the heat be driven more, the light yellow overcomes the blue to a kind of purple flame, or to soft yellow shoots or cones edged and bottomed with lilac; and under this the blue black of the coal, which has become bluer still by reason of the flame, and under this a deep, glowing, orange incandescent by degrees to a white light in the depths of the fire. It is no little beauty

of this way of heating a room that it joins light and calescence, charming the eye as well as the nerves of touch on which the billows of heat fall like surf on the bather. What is light without heat but a glare? and what is heat without light but a mere roasting or scorching? Which reminds me to denounce those holes in the floor called registers, out of which comes a noisome breath of oxidized iron if they be not carefully looked to; also those vile inventions, called steam heaters, which prop their ugly, lank pipes, howsoever disguised, in the corner to ill treat the eye, and still more abuse the lungs with air they heat without freshening. Not that I would call all registers naught but black mouths of a "red hell" below, for modern inventions have their comforts. But it is well to hold them tight in their place lest so they override us as to put gentle beauties to flight. Let therefore a furnace be used, if need be, for its dusky utility; but save places for the open fire for its cheerful beauty. The open fire-place is like a singer's throat,

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a wide mouth of comfort and pleasure. 'Tis also its virtue to be an excellent ventilation of the room by reason of its large, open way to the chimney. A closed stove will do something; for, as air must go through it, so it will draw the air it needs through the doors, the windows and cracks; but an open fire with its generous gateway above the fuel will do much more for fresh air, and that does much for good thought and good humor.

Among the charms of an open fire I must include the poking of it, for I envy not his dull temper or chilled phlegm who can sit by a fire without provocation to stir it, especially if it be wood or soft coal; and wood most of all, whose flaming charms are as great a mingling of the coy and the quick as any buxom belle at a country ball. It must be coaxed much to do its best, but then flames out indeed. But it is excellent comfort to poke a fire, especially if one be alone with it, for it will throw a shower of sparks like witty foils at the first persuasion; but if the poker (I mean the implement

or the man, or both, as the reader may choose), persist, soon shoots a flame, and then many, which have the charm of a conversation. A hard coal fire is different. This is a taciturn companion by comparison, but a great smiler; if it gurgle not with flame, it is very amiable with a ruddy smile all over its broad face. In the poking of wood or anthracite, there is a difference which may be called capital or radical, as one looks from below or above; for the one must be poked on the top and the other on the bottom. Far be it to abuse my readers by telling them which is to be poked one way and which the other, as if they knew not so simple a thing; yet be it said that if one be stirred from the bottom it will go out, and if the other from the top, it will not burn. From which I could draw me an elegant moral with good grace, to-wit: That everything has its right side or end to be touched on, and will do ill if handled otherwise. But another moral comes up, and a more solemn, to-wit: That, though fire be such a gay, gracious

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and smiling servant, it turns to a terror if it gets the mastery. How cheerily burns the fire on the hearth or in the stove grate set out into the room! And how pleasantly mix around it the prattle, the gossip, the wise talk, the merriment, like flowers of many hues in one nosegay! But scatter a coal or two unnoticed in a corner, beneath a settle, under a curtain, or where papers lie astray, and forthwith up leaps a demon, and soon a legion of them, which hardly may be routed by day, and by night will swarm over the house, kindling it like a pile of fagots, till the earth and the heavens gape like a fiery mouth, and the flames shoot and shout like red devils' tongues. Now herein lies a moral, I say, or a picture with a precept; for how many things in life are good if curbed or bound, but loosened or unwarded turn enemies! and these even among the very best of things (as, in sooth, they must be, for what is sterling or precious if it have no strength?), like government, wealth, wrath, love. The which reflection, if a man will follow out,

seated toasting comfortably before his fire, he will spend a very wholesome hour.

I defy anyone to write about his open fire without turning confidential about himself and falling to at his own feelings as at a feast. For what more of a banquet can there be than when one feeds bits of himself to his vanity with his pen-point? And where occur more of his doings, feelings and thoughts than at his fireside? And, hence, where will he himself more cheerfully pop, like the best of good genii, into his own presence? Wherefore now I go straightway to myself with my own fire, and let him find me egotistical who will. Two points wherein I have enjoyed my open fire with solitary complacency are cooking and sleeping. If aught be more delightful than late in the "wee sma' hours," to lay aside the book or pen, stretch me in my big chair and my feet on the hob, and fall a-dreaming, till after a little I bestir myself, having dreamed of toast or parched corn, and then do a slice to a turn before the fire, or

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watch (and hear, too, for two senses have delights herein and soon a third, to-wit, taste) the kernels leap to white flakes in the wire netting; and then, with a sprinkle of salt, enjoy the one, or, with a bit of Edam or Brie, the other—if there be aught more charming than this, I say, let any one tell me what. As to the sleeping, this sometimes follows the toast or corn; and many a half-conscious, often half-rousing and then again sinking and dream-mingled, fancy-fraught and altogether charming slumberous rest have I had on my cushioned settle drawn before the fire. There we sit blinking at each other—I and the fire, not the settle—till the glowing beauty outblinks me, and I retire cosily behind my eyelids. But often I turn this same delight to account, for many a time and oft it has been the stopping places of a night's work, like the inns on a tiresome journey. I have begun at eve tired, the which beginning was a good nap before my fire, as before described; then I have roused me at the edging hour of nine, and scribbled

as if a spirit lay in my fingers, till the witching time was past by sixty minutes; then again I have slept at my fireside, waking promptly in an hour, refreshed for work again; and this alternation I have repeated twice more in the night before the gray midwinter dawn bickered with my lamp.

The house-fires, and the open fire not the least, levy tax of no little work and care, and inventions are promised which shall heat our houses comfortably from some central source, where all the labor will be concentrated, and all the slag and ashes. But I hope we never shall grow so indolent or so insensible as not to cleave to the open fire in some hospitable and conspicuous thoroughfare or common room in the dwelling. As to the ashes, they pave an excellent love-avenue, when 'tis a man's arm applies them to that purpose. "The total depravity of inanimate things", in sooth is a very wanton saying, a flattery of ineptitude, of uncareful mind, of unskilled fingers,—unless it be only a venture in humor, not bad if jocose and good-natured,

but very bad indeed if ill-natured. This I considered when removing the ashes from our great house-stove; for what could be more perversely light-footed than warm ashes? They are worse than thistle down, they dance on air, they have wings swifter than a humming bird's, and little bodies more intrusive than gnats. Yet I persuaded them to a most gentle subsidence and nestling obedience, by means of a pail of water and a long-handled dipper. With these I plentifully moistened the bed of ashes, so that not a mote took flight when I tumbled them into the hod. Which is what she would wish, said I; for she is not "painfully neat" or curious, not she, but she will not put up with things that are as unsightly to the mind as to the eye; and this happens when something whose worth is burned out makes rubbish on things still useful, she says. With this reflection, mind's eye had instant vision of the gentle woman upstairs, and the work glowed; the ashen heap kindled again like gold on silver, as if what was dead

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soul, airy with flame.

Ah, lowly services how sweet they
be!

Behold, from out a well
One can look up and tell
The stars at mid-day, and their twinkle
see.

And so up from my lowly love's
intent
And what small deeds I may,
Above the garish day
I see thee, dear, shine in thy firmament.

And for that thou look'st down,
being such a height,
As I must from my place
Turn up to thee my face,
So as I see must thou see—light is
sight:

I think from my deep wells I no
more look—
Wells of small deeds obscure—
Than thou, whose lights allure,
Regard of me in my small pits hast
took.

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I gainsay not 'tis dear in greater
things

Either to serve, or fly
Level with thee to try
In equal enterprise conjoining wings;

Disown I not the sweetness of thine
eyes

When straight in mine they gaze,
When kind love-chances raise
Me to be comrade in rich exercise;

But O, methinks 'tis a more blessed
care

Which then I take of you,
When I some drudging do
Too crass for reverent soul to let thee
share.

Then most, up from my lowly love's
intent

And those small deeds I may,
Above the garish day
I see thee, dear, shine in thy firmament.

Yes, and this more the man-heart in
me says, to wit, that if a man have
any flavor of antique chivalry in him,

without which he is no manner of man at all, ah! then he thinks it fit reason for being (no less) to shield a woman from the coarser labors if he can, and if he can not, then to grieve over it, gilding the rough fortunes with lights of his attentions and reverence. A man is a shabby scrub who prefers his ease to honoring a woman, as to sit while a woman stands, or to act the Turk while a woman serves, or to take aught first or best while a woman waits, or to push or precede while his love should make all women as one Queen. Nor matters it whether a material purse hath thatched his back well; for a scrubby and inglorious mannishness is like vermin,—velvet may harbor it, and rags may be void of it.

O, what the deeps of the soul may be
If most to one woman because unto all!
What heavens in the eye to see!
What pure religion wherein to fall
Toward her that giveth the sister to
brother,
That on the son bestoweth the mother,

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That to the husband bringeth the wife,
And unto each proves what is life,
Here or up above—
Immeasurable love!

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As I said it was a short and merry
turn from the wealthy cold of February
to the house-fires, so, by the grace of
the Spirit of Song, whom having
written so far, I invoked, the return
is ready and easy. Dear Spirit, said I,
prythee sing for me the vigor of
February. Right willingly, said the
kind Spirit, and did so, thus :

S O N G



February, thou art sheer wintry time:
Nor Christmas carols nor the New
Year chime

To thee belong.

The more methinks a crispy grace
And lively throng
Of beauties habit in thy face,
Lone worth a song.

Though many months have natural
pleasures warm,
Or in them bright appointed pleasures
swarm

In spite of cold,

Thou comest with lone beauties dear
And manifold,
And askest naught to give us cheer
But thine own hold.

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How lovely round thy neck thy
 brilliants hang

That, as from misty sky they shaped
 and sprang,

 So show its fires :

 From twilight east, west, high or low,

 Like burning pyres,

 Icicles the half-vernal glow

 Catch in their spires.

Nor matters whether snow slope east
 or west,

The same its fleece of whiteness is
 caressed

 By rosy sun ;

 The setting glory painteth it

 When day is done,

 And on its breast the splendors sit

 When day 's begun.

Nor e'er were trees so black against
 the white,

Cut on the lustres like silhouettes of
 night

 Upon a noon :

 How crispy-feather-like the tips,

 How crisp their tune !

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Almost methinks more fine these
whips
Than greens of June.

Revels of cold frequent the country
o'er,
And dancing pixies foot the watery
floor
With clicks full frore ;
Frost-drowsy winds forget to roar,
Lulling th' lea shore
Which the unfreezing white-caps
spore
With ice galore !

O, February ! Sole February !
Thou ask'st no help of other, man or
fairy,
On hill or prairie !
Thine urchins own, with torches
flare-y
And glee unchary,
Light thy ten-thousand snow orbs
glary,
Sole February !

MARCH



Let March come in, the blustering youngster, last of Winter's sturdy four—'tis better to welcome him, for he 'll not stay out. And sooth he is a fine fellow, to be welcomed songfully. Yes, of the twelve he is not the least deserving to be sung, if of that bright circle any is undeserving, or one deserves over another or hath any sum of advantage.

March is not so rough and boisterous a fellow as he seems. He is a lad with a rude pretence but a girl's heart. That heart, which is no pretence, continually flashes out of him, as a diamond whose center is lucency will emit sparkles on any evocation. Now, March reveals the soft heart under his windy shag in three ways: First, as I just have said in brief, though he may keep up bluff airs never so, yet he constantly displays his heart at every convenience (if I may apply such a word to weather), like a boy

in his first down, who puts on furies manfully (as he deems it), but forgets himself often, and then his heart escapes, as a wild bird submissively caged will out and off like a shaft if the cage door unhinge or the wires part but a little. March is as variable, wayward, capricious as April's self, though not so changeably ready "to post with such dexterity" from mood to mood in so little time as April can. But then neither hath April such extreme contrasts of moods as March has. The proverb is that if he come in like a lamb he will go out like a lion; but he is very scriptural all throughout his thirty one days—the lion and lamb lie down together. On one day he may roar fiercely from the north-east and bite us with steely snow; on the next day he may smile with the balm of south winds and drive us to cover from his fervency. Sometimes with his smile he swells the fruit buds out of their safe winter somnolency, and then cuts them off with next day's icy breath. But there is no malice in the freak. and if it

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disappoint man's palate somewhat, it may charm his eye and launch his blood the more.

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March is a winter month in this climate, but with a difference. As fervid days in September have a mysterious quality of difference from the ardency of days of June or July, so the cold of March differs from the rigor of February, even if the glass report as low. You feel that Winter's hold is loosened.

Secondly, March can boast some heralds of the coming pomp of the sun. One easily may meet a robin in March, and the hepatica, and the evergreen arbutus rosy under a felted blanket of brown leaves.

Finally, it is certain that April follows this month, which blessed fact may be taken as a part of the soft heart of March; for he does nothing to deny the next month, and much to concede it, and the expectation of April is as much a part of March as one's country or home complexions the sea that we traverse thither.

Not many poets have fallen in love

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with March, or even dropped a wayside friendly song for him. But surely that is for lack in the ear of the voice heard in Peter's vision (Acts X, 15). The Spirit of Song was not averse when I entreated some music for March, but came to me soon, and gave me the following:

S O N G



I say, bluff March,
You 're not so rough a fellow
As you look.
Here 's a brook
Will show the sunny yellow
Of heaven's bright arch,
And the leaping little billows
Laugh at pussies on the willows,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, bluff March!

I say, bright birds,
Ye prophesy a singing
Wide a-field,
And a yield
Of verdure that is springing
To feed blithe herds,
When your wavy shadow passes
Over wavy-wavy grasses,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, bright birds!

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I say, brown buds,
Your greening and your swelling
On the limb,
Set the slim
And misty twigs a-telling
Of sweet rich floods
Up imbibing roots a-pouring,
To the topmost leaf a-soaring,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, brown buds!

I say, 'stout heart,
Go out into the weather,
Things of bluffness,
Things of roughness,—
That natheless croon together
O' the earth's new start,
Giving noted sign and reason
Of a coming gentle season,
Very soon, very soon,—
I say, stout heart!

AFTERWORD

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Gentle reader, we must live on the earth and in time; but the earth is a good earth, and time is very blessed. Surely "all good Christian men" (and all other creeds also, since it is a *human* matter) ought to be cheerful, resolute, buoyantly busy (but not *too* busy), full of that "hope which is the evidence of things unseen" and is also a sturdy girding for honorable work-days amid what we see now. If sometimes you be downhearted, gloomy, discouraged, may I commend to you what is said in January, namely, that however it be with one day or one month or one season, the total year is sure to arrive at its full due of heat and cold; also this thought, which I have found helpful in my own dismal megrims, namely, that if this hour be hard, we must summon will to judge or interpret by the whole day; or if the day be drear, then by the whole week; or if the week be wretched,

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then by the whole of the month; or if the month be miserable, then by all the year; or if the year be desolate, then by ten years or a hundred.

Dear reader, shall we commune in a song of this thought?—to wit :

There 's a chill in the air, a chill and a
chill,
And my heart, my heart I can not
hold still,
But it shivers aloof, and cower it
will,
In the misty morning gray.

From my heart, my heart, I turn not
away,
E'en though with its darkness it darken
the day,
But I question, and hearken the things
it will say,
And it tells me the simple truth :

I am weary, it saith, and I miss my
youth,
And eke in the world I find little
ruth ;

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I am weary and wish to die, good
sooth,
If God will set the time.

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But my heart, my heart, I say, 'tis the
prime
Of honor to bide in the ranks, 'tis a
crime
To run from thy post in dew or in
rime,
Till thou be mustered out;

And what 'tis a wrong to set thee
about
'Tis a wrong to wish, and undevout:
Who wishes to run is himself a rout,
Though an army hold him in.

I spake, and my whole heart knew its
sin,
And lifted its brow, and breathed deep
in,
And cried, There is something to do
and win,
Wherever, whenever the same.

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If a thousand years betide my name,
Or only this breath, or failure or
fame,
One thing is true glory and one is true
shame,
Howbeit I live or die :

The part that is low, or the part that
is high,
Is to run from the thing that I ought
to stand by,
Or to face either heaven or hell and
defy
Them to draw me or drive or abate.

For God 's in the little and eke in the
great,
Nay, naught is a big or a little estate;
Who faceth th' Eterne is nor early
nor late;—
To hasten, or faint, 'tis one ill.

Is there chill in the air, a chill and a
chill,
And my heart, my heart I can not
hold still ?

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But mighty it shall be, and glory it
will
I' some noon, and go its way!

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O God, my God! I thank thee! I
pray!
I bless thee that noon of the night or
the day
Is thy noon still—I can not away!
Here 's home, my home! I stay!

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